

FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Chicago Federal Executive Board Announces 2018 Award Winners

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The Chicago Federal Executive Board (FEB) is pleased to announce the winners of the 61st Annual Federal Employee of the Year Awards. Our annual awards program pulls from over 170 federal offices and agencies and 40,000 federal employees.

The FEB awards represent the broad spectrum of roles and highlight the diversity of public service in our region. This year the FEB honors the courage of emergency personnel, the heart of health care professionals and the dedication and ingenuity of our contracting officers, law teams, and technologists. The service of our winners ranged from 3 to 56 years.

Winners were selected by a panel of judges comprised of local agency directors who did not have nominees in the category they reviewed. The judges identified employees who stood out for their extraordinary service to the public. In total, the FEB will celebrate 350 nominees and 10 overall winners who had the greatest impact in the region.

Congratulations to everyone, nominees and employees.

2018 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

Agency of the Year

United States Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security

The U.S. Coast Guard exemplified an extraordinary Unity of Effort by working collaboratively with other federal and state agencies to conduct 1,256 vessel and 303 facility inspections and to respond to 107 oil and chemical spills on Lake Michigan and the Illinois River Waterways. During an unprecedented hurricane season, Coast Guard Chicagoland also deployed 20% of its core unit to assist in clean up and recovery efforts that resulted in assistance to more than 3,500 people.

Homeland Security and Law Enforcement Team

Operation PARTY EXPOSURE Team, United States Coast Guard

The 2017 Operation “Party Exposure” was an inter-agency maritime safety operation planned and executed in response to the proliferation of illegal passenger vessels operating on Lake Michigan and along the Chicago River. This operation included a robust public affairs outreach campaign to educate mariners and the public on the safe and legal ways to take advantage of the beautiful waterfront. During the height of the boating season, from June through August the inter-agency team provided a major law enforcement presence, issuing operational controls to 24 vessels and imposing over \$140,000 worth of fines and civil penalties to the responsible parties.

John F. Kennedy Leadership

Commander Zeita Merchant, United States Coast Guard

In the aftermath of hurricanes Harvey and Maria, Commander Merchant led rapid triages that saved and assisted over 3,500 lives and reconstituted one of the largest petrochemical port

complexes in the world. Operating in an environment with no power or water distribution systems, she guided over 750 Coast Guard responders to orchestrate relief over 6 Coast Guard installations spanning 3 islands. In Chicago she championed maritime safety and security improvements on the Chicago Area Waterways Systems.

Career Achievement

Theodore Callis, Railroad Retirement Board

Theodore Callis has served in the federal government for 56 years. He began his career as a File Clerk and in 1964 became one of the first RRB computer experts in the country. Thanks to his work in Information Systems, more than 500,000 RRB beneficiaries enrolled in various Medicare program are receiving the correct Medicare premium deductions every month.

Call to Service

Helen Badesch, Federal Emergency Management Agency

Helen served as a program specialist during the catastrophic hurricanes of 2017 when a record number 4.7 million survivors registered with FEMA for disaster assistance. She served an integral role on the center's leadership team by keeping leadership organized and informed, rolling out new technology, creatively reducing stress among the center staff, and assisting call takers with difficult applicants.

Citizen Services Employee

Sheldon Rucinski, Naval Station Great Lakes

Sheldon Rucinski shows humility and a commitment to service every through volunteer work in his community. Sheldon volunteers every week with the Holy Family Soup Kitchen, serving food to more than 200 people weekly. He also volunteers with the Naval Station Great Lake's USO where he serves food to upwards of 300 sailors and even delays his own holiday dinners to volunteer when the USO is short staffed.

Citizen Services Team

Student Testing and Career Exploration Team, Milwaukee Military Entrance Processing, United States Army

Because of the team's hard work, consistency, and ingenuity 324 more students from 4 different schools will participate in testing and career exploration this year. Coordinating a multi-agency effort to assign and manage test administrators, proctors, shipping clerks, graders and test interpreters, the team tested 610 students in only 12 hours, an incredible feat for such a small team. Additionally, the Milwaukee team developed innovative feedback and online career tools that improved working relationship with school guidance counselors.

Management Excellence

James Gorman, Secret Service

James Gorman created cross-agency, cross-city partnerships with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to address large scale criminal investigations that resulted in the prevention of over \$62 million in fraud, \$6 million in counterfeit currency seized and successful operation of nearly 200 protective visits. He displayed outstanding leadership to over 150 employees; several federal, state and local counterparts; numerous external stakeholders and countless citizens in the Chicago region.

Mission Support Employee

Theresa Vollink, General Services Administration

Theresa Vollink supported the U.S and allies' Special Forces by providing exceptional service as an Acquisition Project Manager at GSA. She managed highly complex contracts that provide high technology sensors, equipment, and services that enable U.S. and allied Special Forces worldwide to operate with almost no risk of "friendly fire," increased battlefield situational awareness, and at a much lower weight burden per soldier.

Mission Support Team

Smelter and Lead Site Legal Team, Environmental Protection Agency

EPA negotiated with several private companies to provide private funding for soil removal and indoor cleaning at properties with the greatest risk of exposure of lead or arsenic in East Chicago, IN. They had a commitment to communication with the public through monthly public meetings on Saturdays in East Chicago and to respond directly to questions and concerns. EPA attorneys maintained close communications with representatives of the City of East Chicago, the East Chicago Housing Authority, the state of Indiana, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to make sure that all governmental entities were fully informed of EPA's activities.

BACKGROUND:

Federal Executive Boards coordinate programs between federal agencies outside the beltway. Through the combined efforts of our regional senior federal leadership, we:

- Provide communication during emergencies,
- Foster collaboration among Federal agencies, state, and local governments
- Connect to our community through outreach projects
- Develop local training and workplace solutions for our workforce, including mediation
- Facilitate large interagency projects

For more information about the Chicago FEB, please visit: <https://chicago.feb.gov/>

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